

President's Message October 2023

Greetings all,

2023 has indeed been an interesting year. As we discussed at our VALA conference this year, I believe Vermont Listers and Assessors, and VALA itself, is in the midst of an existential crisis. Rumors abound throughout Vermont that Listers may be extinct within the next 5 years.

I believe the solution to continued relevance for our locally elected and appointed Listers and Assessors is to evolve in our professional practice and to educate other municipal and state officials of the important role we currently serve for our towns, and for the state as a whole.

There is a delicate balance between embracing new technology and the efficiencies it can create and preserving “old school” due diligence and local knowledge of the inventory and nuances of the real estate markets in our towns. I can’t mince words on this – if we fail to embrace change and new technology, we will be left behind and we will become irrelevant. We also need to embrace the concept that our own little towns are not islands that are so unique that we cannot share data between those towns. Any competent reappraisal project for a small town must consider market data from a broader database than just that town. The nuances of “neighborhoods” and specific factors that may impact certain properties are the value added we can provide as local professionals. That said, any opinions of these factors must be defensible and not simply anecdotal.

H-480 presents not only an opportunity, but an imperative, to define the skills needed to do our work successfully and professionally. We need to promote the VPA certification program and the large number of our members who have attained this certification.

Along with standards for the education and experience required for professionals in our industry, I believe we need more clear standards for assessing in Vermont. Collecting the same data points, using similar definitions for land versus improvement values could go a long way towards professionalizing our work and making it both understandable by the public and making the process of teaching new assessors more “standardized” as well. I am not necessarily advocating a state supported CAMA system, and I do not have any stake in that decision; however, I think standards required by the state would be helpful. Even within towns that I serve that have the same CAMA system, implementation of the

database is just different enough in those towns to make translation a bit complicated.

H-480 (or Act 68 of 2023) is very vague on many points and this presents an opportunity for VALA, as a stakeholder, to interact with the study and to work with PVR on recommendations for implementation of this bill. I recommend we all keep our minds open to change and provide thoughtful and professional feedback during this process. I look forward to further informed conversations with you all.

Lisa Wright

President, VALA